

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing protection for connectionless signals in a telecommunications network comprising a plurality of nodes, the method comprising:  
generating a first protection path for connectionless signals from each of the nodes to a destination node;

generating a second protection path for connectionless signals from each of the nodes to the destination node, the portion of the second protection path from any particular node to the destination node is distinct from the portion of the first protection path from that particular node to the destination node such that the portions of the first and second protection paths do not have any common nodes or links; and

routing protection traffic along one of the protection paths to the destination node;

wherein generating the first protection path and generating the second protection path each comprise decomposing the telecommunications network into a ring and at least one ear.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, decomposing the telecommunications network further comprising charting the ring horizontally beginning with the destination node and ending with the destination node.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 5, decomposing the telecommunications network further comprising ordering the ears and charting the ears horizontally based on the order of the ears.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, generating the first protection path further comprising generating the first protection path in a first direction based on the charted ring and ears and generating the second protection path further comprising generating the second protection path in a second direction based on the charted ring and ears.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:  
classifying received traffic as working traffic or protection traffic; and  
routing protection traffic comprising routing protection traffic based on the classification of the received traffic as working traffic or protection traffic.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8, routing protection traffic further comprising routing along the first protection path the protection traffic received on the first protection path and routing along the second protection path the protection traffic received on the second protection path.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9, further comprising:  
determining which of the first and second protection paths to the destination node comprises a shorter path; and  
routing received working traffic as protection traffic onto the protection path comprising the shorter path.

Claims 11-18 (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) A system for providing protection for connectionless signals in a telecommunications network comprising a plurality of nodes, the system comprising:

a plurality of nodes operable to receive and transmit connectionless signals and be decomposed into a ring and at least one ear, the plurality of nodes comprising a destination node;

a first protection path for connectionless signals from each of the nodes to the destination node;

a second protection path for connectionless signals from each of the nodes to the destination node, the portion of the second protection path from any particular node to the destination node is distinct from the portion of the first protection path from that particular node to the destination node such that the portions of the first and second protection paths do not have any common nodes or links; and

each of the nodes operable to transmit protection traffic for the destination node along the first protection path and along the second protection path.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Original) The system of Claim 19, each of the nodes comprising at least two ports, each port operable to receive and transmit traffic for the node and a protection egress port identifier operable to identify one of the ports as a protection egress port for a specified ingress port and a specified destination node, the protection egress port operable to transmit protection traffic received at the specified ingress port for the specified destination node.

23. (Original) The system of Claim 22, each of the nodes further comprising an egress port evaluator operable to evaluate a status for each of the ports.

24. (Original) The system of Claim 23, each of the nodes further comprising an egress port selector operable to select an egress port for transmitting traffic for the node.

25. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 24, the egress port selector further operable to discard protection traffic received at the specified ingress port for the specified destination node when a status for the protection egress port is unavailable.

26. (Original) The system of Claim 24, each of the nodes further comprising a working traffic egress port identifier operable to identify one of the ports as a working traffic egress port for a specified ingress port and a specified destination node, the working traffic egress port operable to transmit working traffic received at the specified ingress port for the specified destination node.

27. (Original) The system of Claim 26, each of the nodes further comprising a secondary protection egress port identifier operable to identify one of the ports as a secondary protection egress port for a specified destination node, the secondary protection egress port operable to transmit as protection traffic the working traffic received at the node for the specified destination node.

28. (Original) The system of Claim 27, each of the nodes further comprising a traffic classifier operable to classify received traffic as working traffic or protection traffic.

29. (Original) The system of Claim 28, the egress port selector operable to select an egress port for transmitting traffic for the node based on the classification of the received traffic as working traffic or protection traffic and based on the status for the egress ports.

Claims 30-32 (Cancelled)